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The Background
of
Mystery

yB 13540

GIFT OF
Professor G. R. Noyes



George R. Taylor

THE BACKGROUND OF MYSTERY

AND OTHER VERSES

BY

GEORGE MACDONALD MAJOR



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Gift of Prof. L. V. Stager

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“The Background of Mystery” and “In the Gods’ Shadow” have lain in my desk for the past three years. Some time I had expected leisure and inclination to revise them, — but upon re-perusal lately they seemed lacking in unity of construction or possibly are essentially unpoetical; at least I felt that I could not work out the idea I had in my own mind. It is probably folly to print what is unsatisfactory even to one’s self, but I could not consign them to oblivion without some little epitaph to mark their grave. The text for that epitaph will be culled from the critics.

January 25, 1891.

M101008

PROLOGUE.

*Suppose that at the Judgment Day
Some man arose in burning hell,
Who in his agony could say,
O Lord, my God ! is this thing well ?*

*Behold, from all eternity,
Before he formed the human race,
God knew me and predestined me
To suffer in this wretched place.*

*Not for my sins or any ill
That I had done to earn his hate,
But for the purpose of his will
He doomed me to this awful fate.*

*And when his Son came down to die,
As chosen in eternity,
He brought me no redemption nigh,
His blood was shed but not for me.*

*The years flew on, and in due time
The harvest ripened. I was born,
And lived unstained of any crime
Or evil save as all men mourn*

*Some trivial sins. Before the eyes
Of men I lived a model life ;
I made my home a paradise
Of happiness for child and wife.*

*I believed in God — I put my trust
That he no mocking title bore ;
Who called himself the " Good " and " Just,"
And " Merciful," forevermore.*

*I held when God came to our reach,
He meant but what we mean alone,
He juggled not with human speech,
Nor gave for bread a lifeless stone.*

*I did not, dared not, attribute
To him such arbitrary ways,
As would the blood-stained Moloch suit,
As even the heathen dared not phrase.*

*I believed God's mighty power was good,
From which no creature's soul could fall ;
I believed in God's true fatherhood,
In Christ who gave his life for all.*

*I dared not think a favored few
Alone received his love and care,
While millions were but born to rue
His hatred and their own despair.*

*But rather that alike to all
His heart and ear were ever ope,
That through dark clouds the sun-rays fall
Of an eternal, living hope.*

*Would any one to him rehearse,
When thus in visible agony
He stood before the universe,
And pleaded for humanity —*

*That vast humanity that died
Without an altar, priest, or word
From God — that smote clasped hands and
cried,
But no response from heaven heard ;*

*Or those who hedged by circumstance,
By alien birth or impotent will,
Could not attain Faith's saving glance,
But lived and died uncertain still —*

*Would any Calvinist, I say,
That ever trod this sin-worn globe,
Defend his creed, nor find that day
God's answer to the friends of Job ?*

January 25, 1891.



The Background of Mystery.

CANTO I.

THE CRY OF MAN.

O THOU of human gifts the source divine !
Lord of all sculpture, poesy, and art ;
The Unknown God behind the pagan shrine ;
Muse whom the Grecian's inperspicuous heart
Fabled in Castaly — what song can start
In soul of bird or man save as thou wilt ?
Of man what grand conception stand apart
Undying through all ages save as built
Of thee and thine the laud — alas, with man the
guilt !

Wherefore what man of unclean heart and lips
Dare sing thee or invoke the heavenly aid ?
Not I — whose spirit walks in thy eclipse
Without the pale in which thy saints have prayed.

Yet, God, what burning in my soul is made !
What sleepless nights these haunting songs have
given !

The cry of man on whom thy hand is laid,
Or shrieks that echo up from souls unshriven
From lurid gulfs of Hell to the white shores of
Heaven !

Yet, God, thou only should'st be feared and
praised —

The inconceivable Deity whose word
Spake matter into being, and upraised
From naught the varied universe, and conferred
On rocks and leaves thy law — on beast and bird
Sure instinct — thought and moral sense on man ;
On man — sole man — who only has incurred
Thy wrath — albeit according to thy plan,
Which who has e'er resisted, Lord, or ever can ?

All thy creation doth acknowledge thee
Most marvelous, wise, omnipotent, and just ;
Self-conscious, self-contained, and it may be
Most loving and most piteous, as we trust.
Who can exhaust thy praise, but ever must
In silence muse on thy perfection broad !
The holy, happy, perfect One who dost
Not need as needing anything our laud,
Self-complacent, self-loving, self-sufficient God !

How wonderful is this, O Thou Most High !
How different from the creatures of thy hand
Who crave companionship and droop and die
In isolation as frail vines that spanned
An oak down-fallen, unclasped in every strand,
Fade and decay ; and oh ! how far apart,
Shrined in thine awful self, serene and bland,
Untouched by tear or prayer or anguished heart,
Immovable and calm — forever calm — thou art !

For anger does not move thee as in man
The spirit is perturbed ; thou canst not fear,
And sorrow casts no shadow on the span
Of thy eternity, nor suffering sear
The tortured mind, or pain-throbbled nerve, or
tear
Of misery, but unmeasured by degrees
Thou ever retest, yet work'st ever here,
And work'st e'er yet e'er retest in thine ease
Like streams of tideless glass, or waveless frozen
seas.

And Time and Space and Death are not to thee,
And Far and Near bear no relation — thou
Who fill'st Earth, Heaven, and Hell yet bodi-
lessly,
And hast no age on thy unchangeable brow.
Thou hast no Past nor Future, only Now,
Unapproachable Almighty who dost fill

Eternity — before whom prostrate bow
Archangels, seraphs, saints who praise thee still —
Thy creatures lauding thy unfathomable Will.

All things were for thine own sole pleasure
made —

And man — not that they add unto thy bliss
But so it pleased thee, for, as we have said,
The bliss cannot augmented be that is
Infinite — self-contained — nor would'st thou
miss

If by thy word this Universe returned
To the inchoate darkness and abyss
From which it sprang at first, thou hadst not
mourned
For man who prayed or seraph that adoring
burned.

Thou doest right because it is thy Will,
And not, as some affirm, because 't is right ;
Thou openest wide thy bounteous hand to fill
The raven's beak, the wild beast's appetite
Howling in Libyan deserts through the night ;
Thou showest mercy, and Wrath tarries still
The heedless sinner once more to respite ;
Thou lovest (blesséd is that domicile),
But why? for Love or Mercy's sake — nay, 't is
thy Will.

The Will of God — the very God of God,
The pillar of the Universe — for lo !
All things that are or will be on thy nod
Depend — all laws that bind the earth or glow
In distant suns which we call stars, or flow
In tides and winds, in tree and rock and dust,
Are but th' expression of thy will, and so
The acts of man are shadowed by thy Must,
Dread, irresistible, inscrutable, and just.

In Heaven it blossoms in the pure white flower
Of happiness and pleasure evermore ;
Thrice happy they who find their natal hour
Or death's tide flowing — on that peaceful shore,
Not through desert of theirs or good that bore
The fruit of this reward, but thy sole Will,
Turned graciously to them even as it wore
Hatred to Esau and the fiends that fill
The Pit with Satan doomed unto eternal ill.

But Earth — oh, Earth ! a great Belshazzar feast,
Where all sup Fate, though few behold the Hand
Pierced by the nail whose bleeding wound has
ceased,
Or perhaps affrighted cannot understand,
Drawn by unchangeable Doom to Ruin's strand !
And yet shall man, whose spirit naught discerns—
Because thus was the Universe first planned —

Shall man — the clay the potter loves or spurns
As pleases him — condemn the flames in which he
burns?

Is it because changed music in Heaven's ear,
The raucous cries of souls in endless bale?
Yet Sin's swart shadow flung athwart the sphere
Darkens the soul of men as with a veil —
From hence, perhaps, springs thy wrath — a
blasting gale,
And thunders and dread lightnings of the Night
Since Sin would even the throne of God assail,
Unlaw the firmament's remotest height,
The angels' service swerve and paths of life and
light!

So Adam; the tree of which the race is fruit,
Whose roots stretch forth and fibers grasp on
Hell,
What flower shall blossom from so dread a root?
What fruit from such a flower and source so fell?
What fate awaits the vine that bears not well
Sour shriveled grapes or flowers that fruit no
more?
Or rose that Beauty bends to kiss and smell
And finds worm-eaten even through the core?
May not God, too, destroy the weeds his garden
bore?

But, O Lord God, the shuddering spirit cries,
Blot conscious souls from life and quivering flesh ?
Wilt thou curse briers whereon no figs arise,
Or salt seaweed because unfit to thresh ?
Man born in sin and tangled in the mesh
Of Circumstance — environed ere his birth
By taint hereditary that afresh
Reblooms when opportunity springs forth —
Wilt thou consign to hell such frailty of the Earth ?

Infinite agony for finite sin,
Eternity in flame for Earth's few days —
Is this the awful truth unfolded in
Thy Book ? And even we read with more amaze
(Just God, thy saints for this too give thee praise)
That Sin and Hell are creatures of thy will ;
Thy strength supports the sinner in his ways,
Determining each unborn act, yet still
The deed though thine with him th' obliquity of
th' ill !

Yea, more — what Muse dare sing it without
guilt ?

Is it not written in Paul that Egypt fell,
Predestined by the scheme thy wisdom built
By whose election souls find Heaven or Hell ?
Hated or loved void ages illimitable
Ere in the womb their bones and fashions grew ?
If Pharaoh, why not our first parents as well,

And blood-stained Cain and treacherous Judas
too?

Ah, Lord, was not their sin the work given them
to do?

O God, thou knowest! I believe it true.
Sophists of ethics, though ye rant I hold
That every deed of man is God's act too,
However vile — however great in mould
The human by Divinity controlled
No murderer's victim dead — no girl betrayed,
No Nero in his life all crimes enrolled,
But thou hast foreordained the career displayed,
Dooming to penal fires whom no resistance made.

The keys of Hell — the shafts of Death are
thine.
The good achieved — the crass mistakes of
Time —
War's blood spilled on th' ensanguined Earth
like wine,
Famine and Pestilence foul-bred from slime,
The world's appalling lists of sin and crime,
Suffering and sorrow and wild phantasy;
The rout of passion — Love, the most sublime,
With Hate its shadow, and all things that be
For which men shall be judged — th' efficient cause
is thee !

The silly insects snapped the poultry's prey,
The fowl, and fish, and flesh of savory smell
That wait upon thy appetite to-day,
Man, petty sovereign, shall they all rebel?
What then! shall man cry from the pangs of Hell
And at his bar ask God to be arrayed
Who only has rights inalienable?
Go to — shall not the choice be his who made
To love or hate, bless, curse, refuse or grant thee aid?

Yet sin is that one awful thing in man
Hated of God, and in the universe
The only creature laid beneath his ban,
But cursed by him with no fictitious curse,
Nor ever can Heaven cease Sin to amerce,
Save the Almighty abdicates the throne;
For as the pagan fabulists rehearse
Of old gray Saturn by great Jove undone,
Sin would depose Heaven's king and reign supreme
alone!

And this is man's estate — O ye who tell
Of finite sin, is it not infinite?
Think ye sin ceases at the gates of Hell?
Think ye the grave can harmonize and fit
Th' unleavened venom of the skeptic's wit?
The festering sensualist — the warrior's pride —
The belle's small vanity — nay, but as 'tis writ,

• “He that is foul, still let him foul abide.”
 Death has no alchemy that such are sanctified.

O fruitful mother of all heresies,
 The foe of science, and sworn friend of wrong,
 The deft appeal to human sympathies,
 But not to seekers after truth belong
 These which Delilah-like seduce the strong,
 Calling on shackled minds the enemy
 Of partisanship, whose dangerous forces throng
 To join their strength and influence even with thee,
 Thou patron saint of hypocrites, Utility !

Yet, Lord, my God, there were two friends of mine,
 And both are dead, unhallowed of thy church —
 One drowned upon the southern ocean's brine,
 Who knew thee not nor found thee in his search,
 The whitest soul I knew — without a smirch
 Of evil — from his boyhood consecrate
 To grand ideals and thoughts, from the high
 perch
 Of saintly, noble manhood 't was his fate
 To die not knowing thee — Lord, where is now my
 mate ?

And she — who loved me more than she loved life,
 Who loved me more than fame — oh! where is she?
 A good heart with sweet, generous pulses rife,
 Who wept to comfort others' misery,—

A gentle soul who erred in loving me,
And yet who dreamed thy mercy, Lord, had been
So vast that like some overflowing sea
'Twould overlook—I dare not call it sin—
The lightning spared her not. Hast thou, Lord,
drawn her in?

Can I be blest if she exists unblest?
Could I be happy in heaven with her in hell?
Lo! while she lived on earth she had no rest
If I were heavy-souled. She loved me well;
Unselfish, woman-like, unquenchable,
Her pride, ambition, hope, were all in me.
Can I forget her? Can I hope to dwell,
Hymning thy praise in heavenly ecstasy,
And see her streaming eyes glancing reproachfully?

The earth — the fairy scenes of heart and eye —
Is barren now since she has left me here;
The flowers she loved — the stars she watched to
spy,
First trembling in the twilight's azure sphere,
How different seem now since she is not near!
In the dull pain of absence — O dread Death!
This is the heart-sick burden of thy fear,
But worse even yet to dread the after-breath,
Or shall hearts be less true when no flesh compasseth?

Oh, can this really be? O piteous Christ!
This awful mystery — this dreadful doom,
Like helpless babes to Moloch sacrificed?
Is such the after-fate that shrouds the tomb?
The young, the fair, the tender mother's bloom,
The prattling child, the brave, the gray-haired
 sire,
The honored of the ages — blast the womb
Of love that bears the children of thy ire!
Be merciful, O God, and disappoint the fire!

This sweet-voiced child I hold upon my knee, —
These innocent eyes — this cheek too pure for
 shame,
Dearer to me than my heart's blood can be —
God, canst thou doom her to the unceasing
 flame, —
Her tender limbs and lithe and cunning frame?
Can it now be that in thy holy eyes
She is accursed — and ere her birth by name
Elected to thy hate, howe'er she tries
Or seeks thee, doomed to feed the worm that never
 dies?

What does it matter, then, what life we lead
If thus in some unjust eternity
The vicious action and the virtuous deed
Find the same wage by some predoomed decree.
Eternal death — whatever that may be —
Of disproportionate torture — oh, I swear

The doctrine seems more horrible to me
Than any fear-born blasphemy that e'er
Was dreamed by naked savage housed in some wild
beast's lair.

O Rachel, in heaven, can thy heart forget
The children of thy travail on the earth ?
O Mary Mother, dost thou harbor yet
The memory of the pangs of human birth ?
Shall motherhood be e'er such little worth
That it will spurn back to th' abyss of hell
The babe it suckled, and with mocking mirth
Rejoice and praise Omnipotence as well
That pushed it down the slippery steep o'er which
it fell !

If such can be, Lord God, unlaw the sphere !
Let night-dark chaos reign and call for mate
Another deluge, but no Noah appear
The sons of Esau to perpetuate.
Renew no rainbow to deride our state,
Saved from the waters in the flames to lie
Eternally, O children of God's hate !
To what frail refuge can ye ever fly ?
Take counsel of Job's wife : Arise, curse God, and
die !

Set thou a guard upon my lips, O God,
Lest Sorrow's voice speak words of sin and blight,
Or love of race drive me to thoughts unawed.
Shall not the Lord of all the Earth do right ?

Shall we not praise him even though he smite?
Lord, our own hearts bear witness to thy claim
Against ourselves — we walk in gloom and night
Restless until we rest beneath thy name;
Only in thy tabernacle peace of heart e'er came.

But what is this misshapen thing called Sin?
What are her wages? answer me, my soul!
Hast thou not found her very bitterest in
Her sweetest service, as against thee roll
Regret, remorse, shame, and that utmost goal
Of bitterness, satiety — ah me!
What pleasure gives the harlot and the bowl
To those who sin in heart-sick apathy,
Indifferent where or what, so time glides rapidly!

The curse of Cain — th' insanity of Saul
Cry for the harp that soothes with fitful calm,
But know at last in vain its echoes fall
Upon the ear — oft heard, it brings no balm.
Away! let dance and revel, arm in arm,
Allure thee to the gay and thoughtless crowd:
The playhouse and the ball have yet their charm.
Join where the laughter merriest is and loud,
And drown in Lethean wine the memories of the
shroud!

Coward! th' inevitable moment comes!
The summons issues forth, thou canst not stay;
The palsying hour that evermore benumbs
The love and light and hope of mortal clay.

Canst thou bribe Death to lag upon the way?
Ah, or in toil, devotion, play, or crime,
Who seeks to flee or find him, God will pay
According to his destiny — his time,
His taste, his acts, fore-mapped by God to sink or
climb.

To sink or climb — who knows which fate shall
win
In the tragi-comedy of human life?
And thou — whoe'er thou art — rejoicing in
Health, wealth, caste, fame, the love of child or
wife,
Youth, and the hope and rapture of the strife,—
Say, dost thou ken what shaft may smite thee
low?
With what of shame thy future may be rife,
Thy youth all blessing but age curse the moe,
White hairs and palsied limbs disgraced and bowed
with woe?

Lady, whose beauty dazzles heaven's sun,
Pure as the shafts of light, or breath of flowers,
Stepping, like some regardless queen upon
Rich rugs, o'er human hearts in thy soft bowers —
Canst thou imagine how these midnight hours
The outcast walks, rejoicing in her shame?
Yet she was once as thee — and even such dowers
Await full many now of spotless fame.
O woman, who can say thine will not be the same?

For what avails even birth from royal loins,
Or priestly sires or wealth or cultured taste,
If Circumstance, which is God's Regent, joins
The foes which need or inclination haste
By love, hate, wealth, or fell ambition disgraced ?
What reft imperial Hapsburg of an heir ?
What turns the holy fields of Zion waste ?
Madness ! which all in their proportion share,
Thou reader, and who weaves these verses of de-
spair.

Thou call'st it madness — madness, yea, of sin !
The universal heritage of man,
All brought this world and all that follows in
The world to come — the all-embracing ban
Whose curse in every crime and woe I scan.
Feel'st thou it not delirious in thy blood
When uncontrollable passions lead the van ?
As wrecking waves tumultuously enfold
The beach where lately summer ripples lapped and
flowed.

Oh what is man, and art thou mindful of him ?
The son of man, and dost thou visit him ?
Or scorned of earth below and heaven above him,
Orphan and outcast, who his sails must trim

On Life's mysterious ocean ways and dim
Sans rudder, pilot, without compass, chart,
Or aught that may the proper pathway limn —
O man, a dread phenomenon thou art !
Who knows thy course of life? its finish or its start ?

I call thy soul to solitude. Forsake
The sprightly converse and convivial scene
Awhile, and to some cloistered walk betake
Thy lonely way, or to the shadowy green
Of some vast wood where naught can intervene
Save Nature's own suggestions, and there spend
A pensive hour and map thy course between
Thy birth and death, and how thine actions tend
To be in harmony with the dread journey's end.

What man dare thus withdraw his soul apart
From its activities and there survey
The character insphered within his heart,
Nor turn with shuddering sigh his glance away ?
I marvel not that saints became the prey
Of demons in the ancient solitudes
Of penance, but the demons were of clay,
For always when alone to man intrudes
Forlornly multiplied the Self that in him broods !

And this they saw, and so wilt thou, O man,—
A glance of Hell — while round thee Nature's
calm

Will add a second curse as if her ban
Were too upon the wretch whose voice and harm
Were th' only blasphemy where else were psalm,
Sole break in continuity of good.

The very stars have an aggressive arm

And war 'gainst sinful souls, and the tongued wood
Loud whispers imprecations against their evil mood !

If grosser earth thus disallows her kin,
How shall he find in Heaven's diviner sphere
Companionship — the sinless mate with sin ?
What pleasure to an unregenerate ear
To sit among God's holy ones and hear
The seraphs praise him and th' adoring Host,
Apostles, martyrs, and elect draw near
Proffering homage — every thought engrossed
In endless laud of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ?



The Background of Mystery.

CANTO II.

THE EULOGY OF CHRIST.

SHINE, sacred Star, whose rays outshine the sun !
Not Bethlehem's plains have caught that light
alone,
But far as yonder orb of day hath run
The circuit of the earth's extremest zone
O'er isles unnamed and continents unknown
And mighty empires that will scepter sway
Further than hath the Roman eagle flown
In flight of conquest, all will crave thy ray
To rise and conquer in the light of the New Day.

Thy dawn brings a new era to the earth,
A new creation greater than the old
When the Creative Word in law spake forth
And the evolving Chaos did unfold

Order, and light, and life, but now behold
A greater marvel than the host of them !
For He at whose almighty word they rolled
Into existence tears the diadem
From his own brow and lies the Babe of Bethlehem.

How sweetly evening fell on Judah's hills !
The sun behind them slowly sank from sight,
The sheep had slaked their thirst from many rills
And slept — the shepherds watched their flocks by
night,
When suddenly around them flashed a light —
A heavenly light that made the stars seem dim,
And in the glory was an angel bright,
Who told the Christ Child's birth, and seraphim,
Cherub, and angel host sang the first Christmas
hymn.

The savage sword of bloody War was sheathed,
And the first time in many weary years
O'er the precarious throne of Cæsar breathed
The benison of rest from strife and fears.
The youthful bride was wed no more with tears,
The trembling children bade their sorrows cease,
For Janus' gates were closed — like summer
meres
The states of Rome slept in the glad release,
And all the world reposed in universal peace.

Yet outward peace but mocked the inward war
 Whose battle-field was in the human breast,
 Alike in him who rode as conqueror
 As with the slave who feared his lord's behest.
 They all sought vainly that one blessing — rest
 Of conscience and of mind, and finding none
 Some dared to die the worst perhaps to test,
 And others, haply braver, dared live on,
 But aimless and *blasé* — the charm of life was gone.

Even the Philosophers but guessed at truth,
 Few reverently and many scoffingly
 Babbling of God and virtue, while forsooth
 They cared, I ween, for neither. Such used to be
 The masters of the old philosophy,
 The mighty men of Rome — the wise of Greece.
 Some preached the gospel of Uncertainty
 And laughed at all — some thought the world
 would cease
 At death, and men turned atheists for want of
 peace.

This was the hair-held sword of Damocles
 That stole the zest from all the feasts of old,
 This seemed to wail a dirge upon the breeze
 And peopled solitude with demons bold ;

It tarnished all the miser's hoarded gold
And sere'd the laurel on the victor's brow,
And turned the Forum's glowing praises cold,
And 'midst the pomp of the triumphal show
The conqueror's mortality it whispered low.

From the tense thought of our consummate age
Let us glance backward to that distant Past.
Four hundred years God spake not. On the
stage
Of Earth's activity there were enmassed
Statesmen and seers, and warriors who are
classed
Greatest of men, yet all despairing, failed
To formulate a scheme of truth, but cast
Upon Death's shore died stoics or assailed
The gods they made or dreamed, even as old Hor-
ace wailed.

Great God ! with what disgusting attributes
Heroes and men of glorious minds conceived
And robed the Deity, from Egypt's brutes,
Worshipped as God, to those that Rome believed
In air and sea and wood — alike received
By white-haired priest, cloaked sage, and igno-
rant clown —
Adulterous deities and gods that thieved.
To altars foul with lust sweet girls bowed down,
And matrons venerable, whose age was as a crown !

O Sages ! sapient names among mankind,
High priests of Nature,—ye who proudly say
That reason is not hopelessly purblind
In things divine but liberal nature's ray,
Confess enough — at least in this our day —
Why spoke the ancients with such different tone?
Why cried the moral wisdom of their day —
The wisest perhaps whom nature taught alone —
That cry, "That all we know is, nothing can be
known !"

And ye — what doctrines do ye now agree ?
Plain nature does this "Age of Reason" teach?
Gods — God — no God ? Does Immortality
Repair at Life's dark end Death's awful breach,
Or does the conscious soul no future reach ?
Who for this life even can the ways define
Of Right and Wrong ? Oh babbling words of
speech !

The Sybarite will his creed construe with thine,
Ascetic—or wilt thou to his stained path incline ?

Blind leaders whom the credulous world receives
Deluding and deluded — easy fools,
Capacious in your faith, though it believes
More miracles than in mediæval schools

Engrossed in book of horn by monkish tools;
From Hume to Strauss—from Rousseau to
Voltaire,
Darwin to Tyndall— or where roguery rules
The brood of Slade or Ingersoll's loud blare —
Where do you coincide? What unity do you bear?

Nor yet even then — nor now t' anticipate,
Nor yet even then — so e'er is Error rife,
Were the Diviner Script inviolate.
The race-proud Hebrew with the words of Life
Blurred God's white truth with ritualistic strife,
Careful of ceremonies, postures, dress,
And scourings of a pot, a pan, a knife,
Feeding on husks — the inward truth and grace
He missed that these symbolic acts were meant
t' express.

Arise, O Star of Hope, arise, unfold
Thy perfect light—the New Day Sun seven-
rayed!
He comes whom Hebrew prophecy foretold
And ancient type and ritual displayed,
The World's Desire for whom the nations prayed,
The answer to the prayer of Socrates,
The Christ whom Roman Virgil's verse portrayed,
Unconscious that his songs were prophecies —
Thy true Messiah comes, Zion fulfilling these!

The Magi saw His portent in the skies
And hastened with their gifts. The path they
trod
Hath marked the way by which the Dawn should
rise
And lead the nations on to Truth and God,
And fling the rays of Liberty abroad,
The westward march of Civilization and Art.
Even savage tribes have at His name been awed,
And a new softness trembled in their heart
And changed the wish to slay and bade the soft tear
start.

As when the fierce barbarians sacked old Rome
In the wild whirlwind of the world's just feud,
The foretaste of th' Apocalyptic doom,
The awful harvest of the martyr's blood,
The curses of the gladiators who stood
And vainly sued for respite — without a tear
The cruel Goth with fatal indifference viewed;
The slave and noble in one common bier,
The torch upon her treasures — all that Rome
held dear —

The mansions her effeminate nobles loved,
The costly robes in which their vanity dressed,
The sculptures and the pictures which had moved
The world to homage — in his rude, dull breast

Awoke no admiration ; on he pressed,
His vandal course with blood and pillage rife,
Until his soul the name of Christ confessed.
Down dropped his upraised spear and ceased the
 strife,
And for that sacred Name he spared the suppliant's
 life !

A marvel this as wonderful forsooth
As any told in the Evangelist,
That selfish, envious men withouten ruth
Should be so changed — but how no convert
 wist —
By godlike love their souls could not resist,
That burned into their spirits like a fire,
Cleansing vile nature's dross ! whoe'er held tryst
With Christ but felt his mounting soul aspire
With a diviner craving than Earth could e'er desire.

Yet to what pilgrimage does Faith invite ?
Not to sweet pleasures of the flesh, but gall.
O'er goals in which men naturally delight,
Wealth, dalliance, power, and fame, it casts a
 pall
And throws aside for e'er beyond recall.
Against all worldly pride it witnesseth,
Yet learned, proud, rich, poor, high and low of all
Peoples and times for this unearthlike faith
Have lived despising life, and died despising death.

Not thus the Jew's conception of his God —
That shrewd monopolist whose unctuous eye
Grasps all advantage treasures rare afford,
And pastures rich, deep wells, fat herds supply.
Not such the swart Mohammed did espy
In his salacious dreams — ah, ever rife
With sounds and hopes of Earth, Mortality,
Ne'er fashioned such a soul forth from its strife.
To whom, Lord, shall we go — thou hast eternal life?

And yet did e'er possessions vast of gold
To miser or to sensualist impart
Calm peace and hope, and courage nobly bold?
Did power e'er satisfy the sinking heart,
Or learning, fame, or the drugged sweets of art,
Or conscious beauty smiling at her glass?
Ah, ever Envy like a poison dart,
Or fear or Ennui — deadliest upas —
Or yet unsatisfied Desire does still harass!

Alas, what slaves we are of sight and taste!
We tread the self-same paths our fathers trod;
Ardent in youth with envious footsteps haste,
Although worn graybeard Age has felt the rod
And speaks the terrors of offended God,
Or dies despairing else or satiate.
But vain th' example; each himself must plod
The Wise King's path, and happy is his fate
If not for happiness experience comes too late.

All which we know and see and feel, and yet
It is a barren knowledge. Human pride
Even on the awful bier of death would set
The trappings of vain-glory as to hide
The hideous fact, or in despite decide,
As some have lived on poisons to make fair
With bloom, carved stone and eulogy allied,
The outward guise of what must in it bear
Foulness unthinkable — Pride's pitiful despair.

Therefore I say, since this is human nature,
Proud, selfish, sensual, vain, in anger fell,
It is a marvel when this perverse creature
Whose tastes against his reason e'er rebel
Is changed but little short of miracle.
To cure the halt, the dumb, the deaf, the blind,
To raise the dead seems less incredible
Than that a man should love and serve mankind,
Despoiling self with all for One ne'er seen resigned.

Not thus indeed all who have named His Name,
Ye priestly hierarchs and spiritual lords
Who despotize God's heritage and claim
Tithes of all wealth and gifts the world affords.
Minions of Fashion, surpliced semi-gods,
Dwelling in palaces while round ye groan
Christ's poor, unhoused, unfed, unclothed — the
bawds,
Shall they not have a greater lenience shown,
O Pharisees, than ye, when trembling at his throne ?

What signify huge edifices built
By plunder of the widowed orphan poor !
Fine carven altars foul with Usury's guilt,
Stained windows and gay music to allure
Rich worship to the beneficed sinecure ?
O travesty on Religion ! was 't for these
The Son became incarnate ? to insure
Luxurious pastors caste and scholarly ease ?
Think ye such lives and churches doth th' Almighty
please ?

Nor chiefly thou, blaspheming Scourge of Rome
Who sitteth throned in incense as a God !
The murderous world that filled the martyr's
tomb.
Hath knelt to thee and trembled at thy nod.
Dark ages that spurned Christ first gave the rod
Of sovereignty to thee, and at thy dread ban
The saints of God have perished, and their blood
Is on thee — vain, old, tottering, doting man,
Who dream'st impossible dreams, for nevermore
there can

Be power in thy weak, justly palsied hand,
Nor in thy maledictions strength nor fear,
Such as when once before thy gate did stand
A discrowned king upon whose slavish ear

The laugh of wassail jarred while thou didst cheer
The hours with wine and harlots as he stood
A mark for all the winter blasts to jeer,
Although even yet, alas ! a multitude
Who dare God tremble at thy name — unmanly
brood !

What coronation hymn with flags unfurled
Did Zion sing to greet her heavenly King ?
And Rome, the mighty mistress of the world,
Whose streets yet with th' Augustan triumph
ring,—
Does not her emperor to Messiah bring
The crown and prostrate lay it at his feet,
Beseeching Christ t' accept so mean a thing ;
And from Earth's farthest bounds in haste to greet,
Do not the far-off kings with lavish gifts compete ?

O Jesus ! Master of the winds and waves
And human hearts ! Thy glories heaven fill ;
The powers of Nature are thy suppliant slaves ;
The foaming sea obeyed thy mighty will ;
Thou spakest to the tempest, it was still ;
Thy word the leper's sickness drove away ;
The blind, the dumb, the halt, flocked round thee
till
Their sorrows yielded to thy healing sway,
And Death at thy command delivered up his prey.

He ran through all Life's stages up to man,
And added grace and dignity to all;
A stainless soul whom Nature could not ban,
He conquered her, retrieving Adam's fall.
He did no act unworthy of his call,
Interpreting the thoughts of God to men,
And wresting his dominion from the thrall
Of Evil and beyond all human ken
Suffering that awful death none e'er can die again.

With whom will you compare the Christ? The
light
Of twenty analytic centuries
Has shed upon his life in love of spite,
Nor shown a flaw. While even Socrates,
Confucius, Boodh, Mohammed — more than
these,
All who before or since have given men creeds,
Are all found peccable — unbending knees,
Christ's enemies, have glorified his deeds
And cried, Centurion-like, "This man from God
proceeds."

The grandest souls are circumscribed by race
And dwarfed to local heroes; seer and sage
And patriots whom the world delights to praise
Are cramped by limitations of their age,—

But Christ is universal, and the page
In which he shines the legacy of all time,
The world his country on whose boundless stage
He moves th' exemplar of each age and clime,
Star of the Occident — the Orient Sun sublime !

And yet the Root sprung from the barren ground,
The undesirable because of old
All kings were graced with purple robes and
crowned
With diadem and scepter, gems and gold,
And in triumphal pageant proudly rolled
Their chariot wheels with blood of conquest dyed.
Such prove the royal rights that men behold,
Confess and worship — such is human pride ;
The poor, the meek, the unobtrusive, are denied.

The world — poor, moribund world for need of
Christ,
The world he made discerned him not, and
worse,
The people set apart to keep his tryst
By symbol, ritual, and prophetic verse
And emblematical histories that rehearse
His spiritual truth — his own received him not,
But in unreasoning hate invoked his curse
Upon them and their children as their lot ;
From that day unto this pursues the doom they
sought !

O wanderers of the world ! Outcasts of Heaven !
Orestes of mankind ! a fearful doom
Is this to thy once favored people given —
Driven to perpetual exile till the tomb
Is fairer than the banquet hall — the bloom
Of Nature and the cheerful glance of Day !
Abhorred of God and man — has Earth no room
Amidst her wastes where thou mayst hide away
Till the long day of wrath hath spent its blasting ray ?

What means the heat of this great anger — say ?
What other nations hath the Lord used so —
Preserving yet afflicting ? Even to-day
Thy brother Ishmael sees the palm trees grow
Where he pitched tents three thousand years ago,
In presence of his brethren and his kin,
While Israel fled in terror to and fro
O'er the broad earth like Cain — in shame and in
His sufferings found no expiation for his sin.

But oh, that sin — that settled evermore
The status of man's heart ! Be mute, O Earth,
With voiceless terror, and thou, Heaven, pour
Cimmerian darkness in black horror forth.
Be shrouded, Sun, that gave the morning birth,—
How shalt thou shine, while men thy Maker slay ?
The Ocean seethe and comets burst the girth
Of Nature — even the Grave disgorge its prey,
Aghast at the dread burden those wooden arms display !

O shuddering History, canst thou tell again
That Socrates the poisoned hemlock drank?
Or measure when the just Athenian
Was ostracized how low his country sank?
The glittering rolls of Fame became a blank.
On all the glory men of old time prized
Was "Ichabod" inscribed at crime so rank
(As if the old world's sins had not sufficed),—
The scourge, the nails, the spear, the thorns, the
cross of Christ!

Words fail — the climax this of human guilt:
Adam's transgression, Sodom's vice hell bred,
The race engulfed, and Babel's high tower built
In Heaven's despite are from comparison fled.
Seal up the testimony! Shroud the dead!
But doth th' Almighty spare his blasting breath?
O thou who marvest at man's natural bread,
To see Life draw its nourishment from Death,
Behold the substance here the emblem witnesseth!

For so had God decreed, and to this end
The whole creation cursed by Adam's fall
Felt pangs of birth her inmost being rend,
Else had the bolt of Heaven smitten all,

Roman and Jew — but not the less appal
Thy magnitude of sin — thy evil heart,
O Man that knew not the predestined call,
But in blind lust of evil played thy part
And to all creatures proved how rightly cursed thou
art !

Earth's wisdom, power, religion all combined
To slay the Son of God, and even so
To-day the self-same factors do we find
Leagued in an impotent attempt t' o'erthrow
The Church 'gainst which is no effectual blow !
Fools ! — as they curse and aim their shafts and
mock,
Year after year their vital wound they show,
And so confess thy power, — Eternal Rock,
On which the saints have stood and braved the cen-
turies' shock.

Earth has no power that parallels thy death ;
No conqueror by his life e'er built a sway
Comparable to that thy dying breath
Founded. An army would arise to-day
To which earth's greatest battle was a fray
Of insignificant numbers, if but so
Thy warfare was accomplished, and Malay,
Caucasian, Indian, Negro — all would glow
With ardor in the cause and bless a fatal blow.

Where are the victors whom the world has feared?
The founders and destroyers of her powers,
Who made the sea their battle-field and sere'd
A populous plain to wastes which Heaven's showers
Could not revive nor Art rebuild its towers,
From Cyrus to Napoleon? They are clay,
Less mighty than this clod of soil that flowers
When Spring breathes o'er it and her soft winds say,
"Arise!" to buried seeds that hear her and obey.

O Death, the loathsome, terrible and cursed,
There is no wreck like thine! I will not rear
Lament for those whose lives are of the worst
(Although we all walk shadowed by thy fear);
But, O insatiate Fiend; what have we here?—
The cunning brain, the souls of mighty frame,
The kings of men—one undistinguished bier,
The foe of Beauty, Eloquence and Fame,
The dread of Love, with emperor and serf the same!

The dread of Love, which were almighty else —
Celestial One that shapes within the heart
A fairy place for glorious moods and melts
The most ferocious by his godlike art.
And yet even Love with poison tips his darts.
O Thou who lovest most, is it not so?
Is not life vacancy when far apart,
And does not Doubt prove Satisfaction's foe,
Forever wilt thou love or thou please evermore?

And yet by Love and Death Christ's throne is
fixed,
Immortal Love and Death that leads to Life !
Intensest of all passions since unmixed
With aught terrestrial. Earthly Love is rife
With charms the eye can seize, and in the strife
Of Mutability mere beauties fade,
And oft the love of mistress or of wife .
Nourished on false ideals dies betrayed
With bitterer memories too from wounds for years
self-made.

But thou, transforming and eternal Lover,
The Substance of all Good — Source of all Light—
Thou art the changeless God ! No space can cover
Thy presence whose sweet glory shines more
bright,
To Faith where purblind Nature deems it night,
Almighty Power and infinite in charms,
Lord, Saviour, Friend — no circumstance can
blight,
No rage of men or demons cause alarms
To those whose weakness trusts "the Everlasting
Arms."

Time proves it true — deny it as thou wilt —
All, all else fails to satisfy the soul
There are true pleasures, too, by which are built
Substantial joys, but yet they lose control

Of fickle fancy as the seasons roll.
The dreams of Youth have fled, Ambition's toys
Attract not when the life draws near its goal;
Friends die, books fail to please, and Nature cloys—
But Christ and Christ alone the parting soul enjoys.

For this cause Christ assumed a mortal breath,
For this endured the suffering and the shame,
That so he might be Lord of Love and Death
And Prince of Life with energy to reclaim
The vile in sin. From prison, rack and flame,
From happy homes, from couches of disease,
From learned, from rude, from rich, from poor
the same
From our day, from th' initial centuries,
His witnesses—a myriad host—take voice from
these!

O happy people whom the Lord doth love!
O glorious Bride whom Christ hath made his
choice!
Thou shalt be safe when Earth's foundations move
And Heaven rolls at the Archangel's voice
Together like a scroll.—"Rejoice! rejoice!
For thou shalt then be with him evermore
At whose right hand there are eternal joys,
And cleansed from sin forever shalt adore
The Saviour who for thee sin's utmost penalty bore.

Herein was Calvary's agony alone,
Christ's pure soul cursed an offering for sin,
And here ceased ethical questions though unknown
How in white innocence was the origin
Of Evil — nor why thus it should have been,
Nor why such world-wide suffering is abroad.
But by the helpless travail Christ was in —
The Well-beloved of God — my soul is awed,
And the dark shadow rolls from the cleared face of
God.

There are no creeds containing all the truth.
Men with their finite logic can deny
That God can suffer, but that scene forsooth
He did not look on with a pitiless eye;
His heart must too have felt the agony
As into Mary's soul the sword was thrust,
And since God suffered, though I know not why,
Whate'er befalls a creature of the dust
Is shallow to the depth of that Almighty must !

The cross of Christ has proved God's love for
man ;
His way is perfect — true, man cannot see
Through the deep mysteries of the wondrous
plan,
But there is light enough to show to thee

48 **The Background of Mystery.**

Men justly held responsible to be
With moral limit to Almighty Power
And limit to omnipotent charity,
And some way to be known in the dread hour
Of judgment all the guilt will prove man's righteous
dower !

Conceive the condescension of the Son
Co-equal and eternal with the Sire,
Who emptied out his glory and took on
A mortal form, even though it did require
In him renunciation so entire
That evermore he must be God and Man,
And as a Man bear flesh's penalties dire
And when no longer under death's dread ban
Be Man in Heaven still, through Heaven's eternal
span.

Yet only so could God be known of men,
Or seen in Heaven of created eyes ;
For sinless seraphs veil their faces when
Adoring — how much more vile man likewise !
Who sees the naked Godhead straightway dies
Annihilated — but in Jesu's face
God's glory shines resplendently. There lies
The fullness of the Deity — all grace ;
In him Heaven's Tabernacle — God's abiding-place !

In Christ th' unfallen angels are preserved,
And Earth's fixed pillars through his passions
stand ;
Even Hell is spared awhile, although reserved
For final judgment at th' Almighty's hand ;
And doubtlessly yon curved blue skies expand,
Made holy by the sacrifice, and meet
For God's invisible presence and command,
Since even the stars that sparkle at his feet
Are not pure in his sight, but marred and incom-
plete.

Then learn — although as the Creator's act
Sin bears a different aspect and device —
Then learn in man how Sin's accomplished fact
Is execrable, since no less a price
Than Christ's death and abasement could suffice
In expiation, nor the race restore
That Adam lost when lust did so entice
That he, for the deep love to Eve he bore,
From self and from his race God's image madly tore.

But more by Christ's obedience was regained
Than by transgression lost, and this alone
Argues, perchance, why sin a place obtained
In the eternal counsel. If unknown

The mercy ne'er of God could have been shown ;
His wrath and justice obsolete law had been,
Unfelt — unfeared — the moral sense had grown
Mechanical in creation, save for sin,
Which evil in itself brought God's perfection in.

So man in Nature lost by Adam's crime,
In grace by Christ's redemption occupies
A kingdom and relation more sublime
To Him who made and saved him, for men rise
From moral death which holiness defies
Absolved from sin — delivered from its power,
So that as freemen now their duty lies,
Adopted sons of God, and in the hour
Of Christ's own triumph shall his heirship be their
dower.

Yet still the world that crucified the Just
Can see no beauty in him — let it scorn !
'Tis the old heathen cry of Cain. We trust
The Blood of Christ to save our souls forlorn.
We find no goodness in ourselves, but mourn
Our dark demerits, and we humbly pray
That he our sinful places may have borne
Upon the Tree, and so prepared the way
For us to happiness. 'Tis all our hope and stay.

Shades of departed seers, whose sugared words
Robbed Death the terrors Life so prophesied,
We see not how your faith with sight accords,
But not on Nature's facts your creed relied.
Ah, monster dread, with Suffering's life-blood
dyed,
Ravening in beak, and claw, and hand. We see
Earthquake and tempest → every power applied
With nerve and mind's vast capability
Of torture to make life exquisite tragedy !

Old Sire, thy son of many prayers is dead ?
Thy daughter, mother ? Would to God she
were !
Cypress, O wife, the wreath is thou hast wed,
Not orange blossoms ! Brother, what of her
For whom thou hastened o'er sea to confer
A home ? Alas ! she knows thee not — the strain
Of expectation was too strong to bear ;
And so is man driven o'er the world's hard plain
With scorpion stings of sin, shame, sorrow, madness,
pain !

However men arraign the ways of God,
He hath his justification in their heart,
And few but feel the inward monitor nod
An acquiescence to each punitive smart.

All feel to some extent their guilty part
In falling short of their ideal of right,
The standard to themselves — which with cursed
art

They break deliberately, and every slight
Deserves and must entail a chastisement and blight.

Why should the sophist from analogy stray,
Or dream of an immoral paradise
Beyond the shores of Death, where far away
The righteous and the vicious harmonize ;
Where all shall reap the same reward and joys,
But pain and merited punishment ne'er dwell ?
Away ! reflection spurns such specious lies,
And even against the will doth conscience tell
That Justice' self must plead for an existing Hell.

Lift up, ye gates, and let the Lord come in !
The grave was powerless to retain its prey.
The Substitute who bore his people's sin
O'ercame the powers of death that holy day,
And rose the Victor — Sin was purged away !
Th' incredulous disciples saw their Lord,
Yet scarce believed their eyes, for even they
Had so misjudged his own prophetic word
That when they saw his grave their hopes were there
interred.

Yet since his death the world has seen him not.
The last glimpse given of the living Christ
To loveless eyes was on that awful spot
Where to their hatred he was sacrificed.
The Resurrection is a tale devised
By craft in their esteem. Alas ! alas !
By nature alien and by Hell enticed,
How slow of heart man is and ever was
To believe the message prophets said should come
to pass !

Nathless as promised in Eternity,
Some caught aright the truth of the refrain
A seed have known and served, nor could it be
The Son of God should come to earth in vain,
Though seeming failure stalked among his train,
And Earth at large is scoffing infidel ;
For God his plan and purpose does maintain,
And that is right which darest seems and fell
And shaped in harmony with his decree as well.

And yet, O Lord, how long — how long, O Earth,
Will Virtue be obscured and Vice renowned ?
Two thousand years have vanished since His
birth,
And even now the murderer is crowned

If but his slaughter hath a world-wide bound;
The petty thief who kills finds no renown,
But with his death the scaffold does resound.
A despot casts a nation's treasury down,
And madly hastes to war and finds th' imperial
crown !

Oh not as though thou ne'er hadst been Earth's
guest !
Thy teachings like the rain that heaven shares
With good and bad impartially hath blessed
Who hate thee most, and even War now wears
A milder form and wounded enemies spares.
The shackled slave is free, and woman, of whom
Lust made a plaything, now new honor bears,
And risen like her Lord from out the tomb
Attains new rank in the new sanctity of home !

O Woman, flower of heaven, or fruit of hell !
Wine of the mercy or the hate of God,
According as thy soul may rule the spell
Of Passion or with Lust's or Honor's rod —
Mother and wife and child — if she hath trod
In the white sunlight of her chastity,
A glory and a blessing — by her nod
Inspiring men to heroic deeds that be
The boast of Time — the victories of the true and
free !

But ah, more deadly than the cobra's eye
Or honey of Trebizond that mads the brain,
The melting glance, low whisper, amorous sigh,
And the warm breasts' voluptuous refrain —
The moist hand's pressure soft as flowers in rain,
The scarce concealéd leg, the twinkling foot!
What gift from men could not fair Helen obtain?
Who with th' Egyptian Syren could dispute
Or to ripe Beauty's lips deny her pleading suit?

With supercilious scorn the nations heard
Christ's doctrine of the brotherhood of man.
What! shall the Jew believe the humbling word,
Or Roman clasp the wild barbarian
And fraternize with the uncultured clan
In German swamps or woad-hued Britain's tents?
Yea — now where Earth's great empires lead the
van
Of progress, there this truth divine presents,
And hospitals, and alms, and healing arts from
thence.

That hybrid marriage even of Church and State,
The wedded powers of alien hopes and ways,
Like iron and clay the prophet could not mate,
Still blessed the Earth with peace and better
days.

Even that communion in the skeptic's phrase,
Nor slanderous all "whose annals are of hell,"
Hath been a sanctuary worthy praise
And a restraint for ages wild and fell
Whom undefiled religion could not curb as well!

And more — yea, sculpture, poetry, and art,
Found a new birth in themes far more divine,
Such new creations by the saintly heart
That nations marvel and have made a shrine
Of reverent worship for Art's new design —
No more the Wanton of unchaste desire,
But the handmaid of holiness benign,
Angelo, Raphael, Dante's seraph fire
And the immortal strains of Milton's heavenly lyre

There are who make it a reproach of Christ
That Art is slighted where he reigns supreme,
And that the genius of his creed sufficed
For the spoliation of the works we deem
The gems of Time, by which in their esteem
The treasures of the ages found no ruth,
The poet's rapture and the artist's dream,
And though in hate they speak and strive the
Truth
To smite a mortal blow — 't is with somewhat of
sooth;

For these are trivial things in Jesu's eyes
Compared with human souls and sin and hell,
To please the lusting heart with new surprise
And in soft Luxury's enervating spell
To bid the poor worm-destined Body dwell,
While the eternal soul that lives within
Is left unto its fate immedicable.
Dread Fate! when lost to hope, and love, and
kin,
From earthly mansions reft to the dread doom of
Sin !

Statues, paintings, words,— the loveliest thought
Of the intoxicated heart and sick
With longings after beauty that hath sought
In various ways to perpetuate its quick
Appreciation — but 't is Culture's trick
To feed th' artistic instinct and nice sense
With form and color, grace and rhetoric,
But leave the moral perceptive faculties dense,
And cloud the spiritual eye, and blunt the highest
sense !

Alas, the beauty of the flesh is lust
Too often ! — even the melody of sound,
The harmony of sculptured limb and bust,
The lyrics with the immortal laurel bound,

May be as poison-flowers whose roots are found
Feeding upon corruption, and in sooth
Corrupting holiness and interwound
With deadly injury to ingenuous youth,
To woman's purity, to virtue and to truth.

Undoubtedly we may and must allow
That Christ — to those who live aright his creed —
Hath clipped the wing of Art and made her bow
To Truth, in whose pure atmosphere indeed
Lawless Imagination cannot breed,
And though resplendent more those wings may
 seem
With which the sensualist the hours may speed,
They fail when Death wakes the delirious dream,
As Icarus' pinions fell in the sun's fervid beam.

Even as no one may with truth gainsay
But Christ hath weakened love of human hearts
Of man and woman, and of kindship's sway,
And Nature's fearless, deepest charm departs,
It is with power of these even as with Art's
That God assumes the first place in the soul,
And these inferiorly, — yea, the darts
Of love in woman lose their fierce control,
Else whom she loves is God and Heaven and Life's
 one goal !

And patriotism dies, and all earth's claim
To those who in His kingdom truly born
Live the reality and not mere name,
For have they not put Heaven's livery on?
All brethren — waiting for Christ's coming dawn?
Is not the world and even their own flesh in
The evil one, and at the judgment morn
Will not its powers and glories 'mid the din
Of crashing spheres, all share the awful curse of
Sin?

Lord Christ! to see those who have bent the knee
And made obeisance in the mystic wave,
To watch them fight in earthly rivalry
Who thus have known thy love and power to
save,—
What shall we call such — idiot or knave?
Yet at the bidding of some worldly power
Christians have sent their brethren to the grave,
Shedding their blood in the ensanguined shower
Of massacre, as hate or conquest rules the hour!

If all the blood by rival Christians shed,
If all the deeds most damnable and foul
In their design by Christ's professors led
Committed, sanctioned by the church and cowl,

Were not concealed by Time, the heavens would
scowl
And Nature's hues be all incarnadined.
Yea, how the mocking fiends of hell must howl
In devilish glee when they behold mankind,
And by Christ's name see every vice or masked or
shrined !

Ah, broad the line of demarcation lies
Between the heavenly and terrestrial sphere,
Christ and the World — nor can they harmonize,
And false to both who seeks to find or rear
A neutral kingdom or to bring them near
And bridge by compromise or sophistry
Th' antagonism — one his bark must steer
With no uncertain course, but choose to be
Despised of God or Mammon through all eternity.

'T is this that makes so pitifully sad
The lives of the reformers of the world ;
Earth's generous souls who have or who have had
The hope to their unselfish eyes unfurled
By ethics to dethrone the vices curled
'Round man's infatuate heart, but all in vain
Their misdirected prayers and tears imperaled
In sympathizing eyes — at least their pain
Brought not the Golden Age they suffered to obtain.

For they are seeking to restore to Earth
The long-lost Eden, but by hopeless means
Building their homes upon a godless hearth,
As he who dared rebuild the ominous scenes
Of Jericho, despite the curse that leans
Upon its gates ; but nothing evermore
Upon Earth's basis, man's fallen spirit weans
From selfishness and lust, or can restore
Unto the soul the pristine whiteness which it bore.

Until this is accomplished Art is vain,
And Learning too, and Culture but a snare,
As these in earthly Courts less favor gain
Than ignorant criminals, for such gifts prepare
The soul estranged nor dangerous menace to bear
Unto the law abiding — so, ah me !
That human wolves should wish Thy power to tear
From this thy world may not a marvel be ;
But, O Lord God, that Shelley's soul should rail at
thee !

O dreamers in Utopia ! Minds astray
With the more awful madness of the soul,
Who have as 't were sought to release the prey
Of Sin from Heaven's omnipotent control,

By Nature still our feelings toward thee roll,
For God's ways to our fleshly hearts seem hard,
And his hand heavy, and th' eternal goal
Of Sin — but it is perilous to regard
The evil thoughts within that madden and retard.

And after all we are driven to this choice:
Christ, or — whom will ye choose instead of
him?
From out the boding darkness, face or voice,
Whose is there makes the terror seem less grim
Or by whose guidance man his sails may trim
And find safe haven past the Dēeps of Death?
Who born of woman but whose life fades dim
Beside his, or is not as though we saith
“Barabbas,” as of old the wild mob's lawless breath?

The Saviour gave the individual place;
Till him mankind were great as nations or
As governments free, or as a separate race,
But not as separate persons, as in war
Even now a thousand fall and Fame's hurrah
Is not for them but for the one who led
And rose to prominence in the brunt they bore;
But Christ razed level slave and kingly head,
And one by one before the Throne all Earth must
tread.

There is a bastard science in our day
Whose vain apostles vaunt their unbelief,
Forgetful that of myriads who obey
The Cross upon its annals are the chief
Of Science and Philosophy — in brief,
Augustine, Bacon, N^ewton, Locke, — each name
Should bring these pseudo-scientists to grief,
Pigmies that strive with stumbling steps and lame
To follow in the strides by which the giants came.

Heavens ! what hypotheses drag out their day
Like Jonah's gourd — the marvel of a night,
Believed by petty dupes who worship pay
To every spirit save the God of light.
All lies are true, however great or slight,
To bolster Infidelity, or show
One of her thousand theories in the right,
Though mutually destructive — if but so
The creed of Christ should (as they hope) receive
a blow.

Like Babel's tower behold their building rise —
These Architects of Laputa — up they reach,
And deem ere long t' assault the defenseless
skies —
When lo ! Heaven's scorn is visited on each,

The drunkard's jargon — incoherent speech.
Ah, blatant sophists ! does Christ's power decay ?
Nay, rather grows colossal though ye teach
What venom the line of scoffing hosts display,
From Celsus to Don Quixote Huxley of our day !

O marvelous Book — the Oracles of God !
Thy foes have crept forth from the ooze and
 slime
Of haughty hearts and straying feet that trod
The paths of lechery or of sin or crime.
O Light to Nature, and the torch to Time,
The test of Science and the Treasury
Of poets and the mold of the sublime !
The Statesman's statute and the Orator's plea ;
Man were a dread enigma were it not for thee.

We see thee yet, fair Star of Bethlehem ;
It points the sinner still, O Christ, to thee !
O luminous above each twinkling gem
That shines like gold-dust in Night's galaxy !
Old creeds are dead, and now no votary
To void Olympus sends imploring breath.
Black Afric, cursed by Nature's stern decree,
In Christ becomes transformed from creeds of
 Death ;
The Brahmin and the Boodh take refuge in the
 Faith.

But more than these are promised Lord, to thee ;
The travail of thy soul hath purchased more,
And knowledge as the waters flood the sea
Shall spread and make thee Lord of every shore.
Where one hath come a thousand shall implore
Thy favor, till Sin doth no more inspire,
And that day of predestined time restore
Thine ancient people, who with psalm and lyre
From every land will haste to crown the true
Messiah.

Meanwhile the land her lonely Sabbaths keeps,
Pillaged by fierce marauders and betrayed
By false Christs till the slain and ghastly heaps
Without her walls a sickening festival made
For jackals and the wild beasts, while arrayed
In sackcloth those within fought with despair
And famine — and like Thyestis' banquet laid —
But faint at heart the shuddering Nine forbear
To chronicle th' unnatural deeds the scribes declare

Mad sires and women cast in delicate mold
Committed, but the heaven above was brass
To prayer and sacrifice, and as foretold
By their Law-giver, never nation was

But not beyond reversal is their doom.
Redemption comes; till then, O faithful land,
In vain the stranger seeks to make thee bloom,
But thorns and briars spring beneath his hand
Luxuriantly, while cursed by Famine's wand
Sour, shriveled fruitage and aborted flowers
That fail of harvest — all he can command.
The forts and towns are dens — the wild ass
cowers

O land of Love and Death ! in happier times
Not thus the hours of day and evening meet,
But when the moon the arch of heaven upclimbs
The voice of heart and tabret cheer the street,
And boys and girls at play. The air is sweet
With odors of the vintage — blossoming trees
And falling waters charm eye, ear, and greet
The lulled sense with delicious thrills of ease —
The pastoral joys of those who love delights like
these.

Olives, almonds, figs, the clusters of the vine,
Night-blooming flowers, and, fairer than these all,
The blushing maid whose starry eyes ashine
Are brighter than the sparkling dew that fall
Moonlit on purple grapes. The weary thrall
Of desolate years have exiled even love,
But once responsive to the turtle's call,
What tales were told to hearts that feared to move
For very joy, in every haunted mystic grove !

These yet, will Zion's be, and she who now
Is scorned of all the nations, in that day
Will wear a crown on her anointed brow
And rule the earth with the supremest sway.
The Star of Jacob will revive his ray
And Israel and Judah bend the knee
Restored, and to the Root of Jesse pray.
Even from afar — the islands of the sea —
To Shiloh will the gathering of the people be.

But we, O God, grant us the second birth !
Our hearts are restless till they rest in thee.
Like Noah's dove, we wander o'er the Earth,
Seeking, but find no sanctuary to flee
Until we reach the road to Calvary.
Lift, God of Peace, on us thy countenance
That we the footsteps of thy saints may see.
Lead us to Jesus — lead us by thy glance,
And from our eyes unveil the scales of ignorance.

By thy Son's birth, from Mary's sacred womb ;
By the pure life thy righteous Servant led ;
By Christ's Temptation in the desert's gloom ;
By his Transfiguration — by the dread
Gethsemane with awful agony red,
By his thorn-crown, and cross, and by his grave,
And by his Resurrection from the dead,
And his Ascension, we lost sinners crave
His Intercession now our souls from Hell to save.

So shall we taste the everlasting joys
At thy right hand when heart and flesh shall fail,
When Earth is sinewless, and Nature cloy.
O Bride of Christ ! no sins can e'er assail
The Blood-washed who have found the Holy
Grail.
But God will wipe their tears and they will see
The New Jerusalem within the veil,
And the new Heaven and Earth where Christ
will be
The glorious Light and Temple of Eternity !
1888.

EPILOGUE.

*Forgive the error and the sin
Commingled in these feverish lines.
Forgive the unpruned thoughts herein
That fail to reach Thy high designs.*

*Forgive the blindness of the mind,
The hardened heart, the shortened sight,
That failed to feel Thee ever kind,
That questioned if Thy way was right.*

*Forgive that I, instead of psalm
Of worship, gratitude, and laud —
That I who dust and ashes am
Should argue of the ways of God.*

*Forgive the rash irreverence,
If there be such in word or thought,
As though I knew the Why or Whence,
As though Thou needest to be taught.*

*Forgive that in my ignorance
I reason rather than obey,
That at the end I cast a glance
Before my feet pursue Thy way.*

*But be this moral to my song :
I hold by faith, though not by sight,
That man must ever be the wrong,
And God must ever be the right —*

*Right when he smites the hardest blow,
Right when he veils himself in Night,
Right when our tears of sorrow flow
And vainly still we peer for light.*

*I know not the result of things,
But still will hope in all distress
That out of human failure springs
The harvest of divine success;*

*That no malignant lust to curse,
That not a pang of needless pain,
Obtains in God's vast universe,
But all works some eternal gain.*

JANUARY 26, 1890.

MISCELLANEOUS VERSES.



A Modern Ulysses.

1861—1865.

I.

IN creamy lawn and laces rare
And ripe red roses on her breast,
And jewels flashing in her hair,
Her charms must not be sung but guessed.
The marble fountain mirrors bright
Her image in its beaded spray,
No marvel in her lover's sight
She seems a Naiad come that way.

The thievish breezes faintly stir
The pillaged blossoms at her feet,
Her faithful lover sees but her
Compared with whom no flower is sweet ;
For as her heart-throbs go and come
An atmosphere around her flows
Like the soft air that trembles from
The shredded petals of a rose.

Her eyes pursue with languorous ease
The limpid water's airy flight,
Or turn to vines trailed from the trees
With pendant bloom or berries white.
And then in ivory-lidded tombs
She veils them in a transient dream,
And while her thoughts find voice resumes
The lately interrupted theme:

“I love you — yes — but there has grown
Within my soul a formless fear
That startles like a prophet's tone
My doubting spirit's inner ear;
And I have questioned of my heart,
‘Is this the man thou dost elect
Through life to sway thy better part
And thy obedience and respect?’

“And ever — Oh, forgive the word! —
The answer, ‘No,’ tolls in my heart,
But better that its voice be heard,
Even if the truth should bid us part;
For though since Childhood's earliest years
You've been my hero ne'er estranged,
Yet different now the world appears,
And you or I, or both, are changed.

“ Although in truth you have as yet
The same clear cheeks and eyes of fire,
The courted leader of your set,
The model of correct attire ;
Though still the foremost as of yore
In games and sports, at chase and ball —
But, oh, the woman soul craves more
Before it can surrender all.

“ You have not lived — the silken cords
Of sloth have bound you unto ease.
O master of smooth flattery’s words,
How trivial judged by deeds are these !
Though rank and wealth men hold as worth,
If he has toiled to bless his race
A base-born cripple bent to earth
In Heaven stands in higher place.”

As one whose hopes are in eclipse,
As one who bows to doubt and fate,
Her hands he lifted to his lips
And brought her to her father’s gate ;
Then bowing with a courtly grace,
He said, “ The vapid Past forgive.
When next we stand thus face to face,
I shall have some excuse to live.”

II.

He was an orphan dowered with all
That wealth could buy or caste desire,
But now upon his spirit pall
The joys he dreamed would never tire —
The dogs that barked him welcome home,
The steeds that neighed congratulate,
The fancy fowl, the pigeoned dome,—
From all he turned him satiate.

And in his mansion with its walls
With pictures decked in golden frames,
And faint perfume blown through the halls,
The smoking den and clouded games,
Through every fair luxurious room,
Unexorcised by morning bright,
There seemed a specter and a tomb ;
It was the ghost of past delight.

Old founts of joy and wisdom's spring,
The books he loved had lost their sway,
But music soothed the Hebrew king
And drove his malady away.
With trembling hands he touched a chord,
And tried — but vainly tried — to play,
For lo ! his soul rose at a word,
“ Life is no more a holiday.”

He glanced at his small, useless hands,
The white, smooth palms of idleness.
"The coarsest laborer's on my lands,"
He muttered, "I would change with his."
His nobler self as from a trance
Awoke and mused in reverie:
"To every noble thought of man's
God gives an opportunity."

The morning paper caught his eye —
"My country calls to arms," he thought;
"If I should in her service die —
I, who ne'er deed of labor wrought,
I, who have only pleased my will
Nor cared to sooth another's pain,
My heart were proved not wholly ill,
My life were surely not in vain.

"And if some hand with honest tears
Should write — a comrade it might chance —
'This man for five and twenty years
Fared softly in sweet dalliance,
And then like a new Prodigal he
Flung his soft robes of slavery down
And died that others might be free,'—
This surely were a victor's crown."

III.

He proved he loved his country well,
Through years of vengeful shell and shot ;
And when the tides of battle fell
His presence cheered each sufferer's cot.
Thus heart and mind in larger spheres
And sweet activities did move,
Till Peace kissed dry his country's tears
And he returned unto his love.

Still young and fair with gem-starred hair,
And clinging lace around her thrown,
She met him with a gracious air
And in her boudoir and alone.
Her eyes still rivaled envious stars,
Her laugh still silvery melody,—
But as a single false note jars
The soul attuned to harmony,

So something — perhaps the curl of jet
Toyed with to lure his word of praise,
Or perhaps the smile — O fair coquette !
An instant that the glass betrays
Whate'er it may have been to dim
The sweet accord of soul and face,
He saw she had not grown with him,
Nor soared above the commonplace.

She read his thought intuitively,
And watched his ideal droop and die
Before the vain reality,
And laughed and chatted like a pie,—
Yet hated him who dared to see
In her fine gold the least alloy,
And stabbed his love — “Pray stay to tea,
And see my husband and our boy.”

DECEMBER, 1887.

The Lady in White.

**ARRAYED in white she is more fair
Than queens in state and jewels rare,**

**Who frustrate Beauty's high intent
With meretricious ornament.**

**She needs no aid from Art or Dress
To magnify her loveliness,**

**But like a violet by a stone
Her beauty is herself alone.**

**Her form perfection and her face,
Her carriage stateliness and grace.**

**The Host redeemed in garments white
Are beautiful in Heaven's sight.**

**Their garb is but the simile
Of inward grace and purity.**

**So clad in white it represents
Her true self's snow-like innocence.**

Her white soul ne'er by passion tossed
Or wrong desire or hatred crossed.

Her truthful mind without a spot
Where evil thought adventures not.

Her patient heart, her spirit pure,
Her temper peaceful and demure.

Arrayed in white she is more fair
Than queens in stately pageants are.

DECEMBER, 1887.

To a Lady.

**If by incredible decree
This Earth revolved through endless night,
The darkness could not rob from thee
The homage that is beauty's right,
For men would hear and hearing be
As charmed by ear as now by sight.**

**For that immaculate soul of thine
(A diamond in a pearl-set case);
Thy radiant thoughts in words as fine
(The index of thy spirit's grace),
Confess a beauty as divine
As faultless form and perfect face.**

**Thy voice — the nightingale's complaint
Is not more sweet, more rich, more clear,
When thou dost sing of love or paint
In flowers of song his hope or fear,
And thy chaste hymns, melodious saint,
Like seraph's tune enchant the ear.**

Should I compare thee to the sun?
Night, cloudy night obscures his ray;
The stars their wondrous courses run,
But lose their luster during day,
And birds of Paradise are dun
When Eve's white star shines o'er the spray.

Love's amorous bards applauding sing
The flowers that scarce outlinger May;
Thou wear'st them yet I will not string
My harp to blossoms frail as they,
When thou dost such an opulence bring
Of loveliness beyond decay.

DECEMBER, 1887.

Destiny.

BLUE are her eyes as the gem turquoise,
The flowers in her cheeks are peonies rare,
And the sun-bright halo that circles the saints
Her burnished fillet of close-coiled hair.

Love sees no sun that outshines those eyes,
But beneath ivory lids they eclipse at praise,
For she walks love-proof like the huntress queen
And snowy-souled in her virginal grace.

Love on her lips spies a rare delight,
Love on her cheeks a perpetual feast,
Love is enmeshed in her fragrant hair
As a moth in amber is ne'er released.

As a bee finds the nectar stored for him
But stings the rude touch that would rifle the
bower,
The elect knight-errant will win the prize
Borne on the car of th' auspicious hour.

While fully conscious that ne'er for me
The charm of her eye or her treasure of heart,
Still must I love her and worship afar,
Seeing Love's blessings but bearing his smart.

DECEMBER, 1887.

The Test.

TWO angels couched beneath th' ambrosial trees
Of Heaven debated this deep question o'er —
Whether a daughter of the Earth e'er bore
An offspring who denied God's being. These
Argued as long as sprung from eastern seas
The unleashed sun would touch the western
shore,
A day earth measure — and more dark the more
The point was mooted grew its mysteries.
Through seraphim, God's tireless melodists,
Cherub and archangelic host it ran ;
Until a voice ineffable light amid
Replied: " Descend among the sciolists,
And play queen, bishop, castle, king, knight,
man —
The pieces in full sight, the players hid."

Launched earthward where the star-clubbed
hunter stands,
They heard where Science held a tournament,
Supposed denied or taught inconsequent
Creative Mind — then without causative hands
As men saw, chess and board a space demands

Of their own impulse move, take check and end 't
In mated king. At this one angel bent
To test how far Earth's casuistry expands,
Clouded his glory, crying (fleshed as man),
 "Knights may not chess move of their own
 intention,
If matter can this orderly world devise?"
But they — "There is no God, blind fool, but can
 These ivory bits play without man's invention?"
So sadly the late disputants sought their skies.

DECEMBER, 1887.

A Village Maiden.

SHE is a simple village maid
In printed calico arrayed,
In cotton stockings, misshaped shoes,
Which dainty ladies never use.
Coiled in a simple braid her hair,
A common flower perhaps prisoned there ;
But never gems of art or mine
Within its chestnut tresses shine,
And never on her fingers blaze
The diamond's sun or emerald's rays,
Or rubies sunk in golden bars
Like some imprisoned fire from Mars ;
But in their stead, poor piteous thing,
Her mother's mended wedding-ring.
Ah, lady of the haughty stare,
You would not waste a thought on her,
No more than cast a second look
 Upon the dandelion root
That for a pebble you mistook
 And pressed to death beneath your foot,
Or did you crush it purposely
Because it did not please your eye ?

She has some claim to Beauty's dower,
The beauty of a slighted flower
That sprung in every woodland lair,
The fields and by-paths everywhere,
The rustic churls pass blindly by —
Oh then, what simile will apply,
Since violet flowers and sapphire skies
Are sworn to high-born beauty's eyes,
And lilies pale and roses red
To wealthy ladies' cheeks are wed?
Could I some common flower discover,
Unsung by bard, unplucked by lover,
Then I could sing her eyes' deep blue,
The blush white on her soft cheeks too,
The crimson on her lips, and 'neath
Their petals the bright shining teeth.

No title-deeds to wealth she owns,
Nor bonds, nor lands, nor precious stones, —
And yet, ah me ! the care and fret
Which vast possessions e'er beget,
The thorn-crowned day's anxieties,
The nights that frightened slumber flees,
Though wooed in rooms of gilded ease,
And down and silken canopies ;
While she — her days in drudgery spent
Hears in her heart the bird Content,
And o'er her in night's dreamless hours
Sleep sinks like drowsy moths in flowers.

Ah, which is rich and which is poor?
 I hold this truth is fixed and sure :
 God's compensation never fails ;
 He balances in golden scales
 The gifts of rank and circumstance,
 And never by fortuitous chance.
 It haps that on the breast of care
 Are pearls and diamonds warmed and fair,
 While the light heart of happiness
 Beats gratefully in gingham dress.
 Yea, she has riches in her health,
 Her very toil she feels is wealth —
 To wash a plate for one she loves,
 To feed her chickens and her doves,
 To steal at times a restful hour
 And watch her roses burst in flower.
 At church she sits among the choir
 And sings with a seraphic fire,
 And hears the minister relate
 How through his dear Son sacrificed
 The love of God makes rich and great
 Men — worms of earth but heirs through
 Christ.
 For her the new Jerusalem
 Has streets of gold and gates of gem,
 For her Life's stream in crystal flows,
 For her the tree of amaranth grows,
 And she, though poor by earth's degree,
 God's child — thy heir, Eternity.

O child of fashion, as you stand
Upon the moonlit sea's gray sand,
So languid — weary of the day's
Vast opulence of idle praise,
If some bright angel wandered here
A season from his proper sphere,
Which would he hold in nobler view —
The guileless village maid or you?

She ne'er has felt the fever heat
Of fame thrill in her pulses' beat,
And yet she tastes a local fame —
The whole round village knows her name.
And tell me what the difference is
Between the hero's fame and this?
Save that through longer arcs of time,
 More wide circumferences of space,
The spreading circles of sublime,
 Immortal thoughts and deeds we trace;
Yet millions plod upon the earth
Who never heard of Shakspeare's birth,
And empires vast even as his own
Ne'er knew of Cæsar or his throne.
O echo of a voice that was,
 O shadow with the substance fled,
A footprint in the withered grass
 When he who pressed it there is dead.
But her aim for the present here
Is God to serve within her sphere

And leave the afterward with God,
And to her Saviour all the praise —
A true philosophy more broad
Than anxious search for earth-born bays.
What boots it to the heedless corse
Fame's plauding million throats and hoarse,
When from the precincts of the tomb
He cannot hear and could not come ?

She is a simple village maid,
Whose timid foot hath never strayed
A dozen leagues beyond her home.
No daisies plucked from Keats's grave
Are souvenirs of days in Rome,
Nor primroses that seem to hold
A mirror to the moon's pale gold.

Nor heather that did sweetly wave
Upon the Scottish hills betray
How far her feet have sped away.
Poor child ! — her innocence doth rate
Her brother as a traveler great
Since he beheld a neighboring State.
She knows but little of the schools,
Of Euclid's problems, Murray's rules ;
She never heard of Tasso's verse,
Of Petrarch's Laura, or her name
Whose loveliness gave Dante fame —
The immortal triad unto whom
It was their strange melodious doom
That love should blessing be and curse.

She knew as little, I dare say,
As girls at Newport or Cape May
Of Elzevirs and Aldi books
And knowledge hid in musty nooks.
Yet still across her mind, I say
Bright golden fancies had their sway.
The clouds across a summer sky
Were not clouds always to her eye;
The flowers and grass on which she stood
Held teachings in them hidden by God,
In whom — as ignorant as a bird
Of brilliant souls that grandly erred,
She held — her hope in life and death —
A present and undoubting faith.

* * * * *

DECEMBER 31, 1887.

A Coquette.

THE oft-told tale of women fair, men fools;
Strength leaves the strong and wisdom flees the
wise,

Ambition youth, from age his homilies
(Frost in the hair ne'er heart of ardor cools),
And sweet Philosophy in vain holds schools
Before the smiles of those unchanging eyes.

Thou who despisest conquered lovers' sighs,
Thou who more harshly than a despot rules,
Since Adam dared his God for love of Eve,
Men's fame, kings' crowns, the very flowers of
hell

Thy lovers have dared pluck thee and dare
still —

And thou — what guerdon dost thou give or
leave?

Ah, let Scotch Mary's white-haired jailer tell,
Or happier he asleep on Latmos' hill.

JANUARY 15, 1888.

Love and Death.

THE blown sea breaking o'er a wall of rocks
Hollows a shell-shaped bed for quiet waters
And spent waves driven shoreward. Here we found
her

With tangled seaweed laced around her form
Like strips of dark green satin, eyelids sealed
As if some pitying sea nymph kissed them shut,
And life's last legacy to death — a smile —
Upon her lips, and death's dread mask itself
So fair a counterfeit of blushful life
That you might fancy her a naiad sleeping
Or syren tired of song. Her hands down-dropped
Jeweled and clutched in one a broken flower,
And in her white-orbed bosom hid a letter
Written in beautiful cursive script that read :

“In love a woman's heart and life are one,
Or rather woman's love lays hold on death
As her protector when despised and spurned,
The sole resource of honor and despair.
Therefore as you have ranked my love a weed,

I die — and seek from God but one revenge,
That I who was not beautiful in life
In your eyes may be beautiful in death ;
And as you gaze upon me in my shroud
Ask yourself : ‘ What immedicable wound
Did she inflict that called for this revenge ? ’
You say I trod men’s hearts — have any suffered
As you have made me suffer ? I was young
And beautiful, they said, and youth and beauty
Love adulation, but I craved not yours.
I spun no fatal web to catch your soul
As you sought mine, and when with cunning skill
You asked for love I gave you my whole heart,—
And you — you crushed it with contempt and scorn.
Therefore let all men judge who was more cruel,
I who gave love to you that was my life,
Or you who gave me hatred unto death.”

Her prayer was heard — in death too as in life
She was the model and the type of beauty
That Art might copy and become immortal ;
But I would rather picture her in life,
Fair Proserpine ere she became the bride
Of coal-black Dis. Oh, she was queen of life !
The languorous breath that shreds the lily buds
Into full blossom seemed to pulse around her.
Even on the night that had such tragic morn
My friend had given a ball where she had been
Th’ admired of all eyes, praised of every tongue ;

Addressed with compliments that spoken to others
Were coarse hyperbole, but were to her
As natural and right
As self-prostration where a god has stepped.
Alas ! what change six fleet-winged hours begot :
One moment as the moon climbed to her noon
Bepraised, and then as noiselessly stole off
As if an angel hidden in her flesh
Had borne her off to heaven. Through the fields
Twinkling with the dew and sweet with earth's
loosed odors,
The ghostly patch of woods star-lit and cold
We searched and called aloud, and Echo mocked,
Till as gray dawn crept shivering o'er the sky
We found her here.

The letter was addressed

Unto our host, who read it silently,
His face an ashen white of sudden pain.
But as we bore her tenderly to the house
He spoke. "After the funeral," said he hoarsely —
"After the funeral — come — I will explain."
And thus within a week we walked these fields
Unto this fatal lake, and sitting here
Upon the verdurous bank beneath this tree,
He told his tale — the murmur of the waves,
A sea-bird's cry, a loosened acorn dropping,
The only sound that voice or echo found
To tell of other life.

And thus my friend :

“ The name of Edgar Clive is strange to you,
But is to me familiar as my heart-throb.
I met him first in Florence six years ago,
Rich in his love of art and poor in purse,
But in his heart and character a treasure
Vaster than unmined mountains veined with gold.
And I accounted his deep love for me
More precious than my fortune. Day by day
Our streams of separate life commingled more,
Till like the ancient Christians neither held
An individual property, but shared
In common till this woman crossed our path.
Oh, she was fair beyond all rivaling,
To whom all spoke words should be poetry ;
All flowers of language, all immortal thoughts,
That shine through our poor tongue as the white
stars

Gleam through the clouds, too coarse exteriors
For such bright souls, became her well as gems
Her glossy hair or roses on her bosom.
No wonder Edgar loved her — madly loved her ;
But she — it was her sport — her heart despised
The very opulence of adulation,
Her polished selfishness sphered round her soul
That it appeared a virtue. So I swore
That I would save my friend from this Delilah.
But he was Samson shorn before I knew it,
And not alone his love for me grew cold,

But Art no longer held a shrine for him.
He fled his atelier for gaming-tables
To win her presents, and at last became
Bankrupt ; and then she smote his love with smiles
Or archéd eyes that heard incredulous tales :
‘ Really she had not dreamed — she had not thought
That his intentions were so serious.
Sorry — she liked him as a friend so much.’
So I, the wealthy American, brought her tribute,
The gold of lavish gifts, the myrrh of pleasure,
The frankincense of flattery — and ere long
She loved me deeply as my friend loved her.
Oh, then it dawned upon me I was base !
And then I sought t’ undo my work, and could not ;
And then I sought to love her too, but could not,—
For love comes not by force or prayer,— and thus
Were all things no whit better, but much worse.
My friend scorned more than ever, and to me
Awarding all the blame and loathing me ;
And she, to me who brought the vulture Hate
Sending the sweet dove Love. I felt accursed,
Ashamed of day’s white light, for so revenge
Like to the tortured scorpion stings itself—
Yet who could dream such love in a coquette ! ”

“ Twice perjured ! ” shrieked a voice behind the
tree ;

“ False to her memory who died for you !
False to the friendship you professed for me ;

There is not air enough 'neath liberal heaven
For you and me to breathe and live an hour."
And turning, startled by this fierce tirade
That brawled like a wild stream down banks precipitous,

I saw a man with features passion stirred,
Brandishing in his hand a long, keen knife.
'T was Edgar Clive — my friend knew well the voice,
And I intuitively guessed its name,
And we both knew it gushed from lips of madness,
As the deed proved ; for hardly had we risen
Than with a shriek ear-splitting, which the woods
Re-echoed back, he rushed upon us both —
But stumbled, being blinded by his passion,
Tripped o'er a broken branch, and headlong fell,
Sheathing the glittering weapon in his breast.
So perished Clive within a swallow-flight
Of where the lady that he loved had ebbd
Her hapless life away upon the tide.

And this is why this house is tenantless,
And these rich arable acres lie untilled,
Left fallow to the despotism of weeds,
Luxuriant thistles, waist-high golden-rod,
Rank grass, and here and there, chance sown by
wind
Or dropped by vagrant bird, a garden seed
Taken root has bloomed 'mid alien environment.
And by the lake the sea-bird builds her nest

All undisturbed along the sedgy marge,—
While he who owns them, exiled from his country,
Perchance now hears from far-off minarets
The muezzin's sonorous call or on strange hills,
While Eve's first star shines paly from on high,
Lists to the bulbul sing his passionate plaint,
At which the roses rend their virginal buds
And breathe rich fragrant sighs.

JANUARY, 1888.

Sonnet.

SHE placed the flower he loved in her fair hair,
 And whispered, " Heart, he will be here to-night
 Of whom long years these eyes have mourned for
 sight ";
 And stood his picture by her sewing chair
 To make expectancy less hard to bear,—
 And so sat waiting — dreaming how time's flight
 Had made his mind and soul more broad and
 bright,
 Making perfection what was ever fair.
 And when he came — O God ! that he had died
 With his first word of welcome, so that she
 Had never known his spirit commonplace.
 How oft has love thus falsely prophesied,
 Th' ideal smote dead by the reality
 As men were slain by the dread Gorgon face !

JANUARY 22, 1888.

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